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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality**

**Agency Information Collection Activities:**

**Proposed Collection; Comment Request**

**AGENCY:** Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HHS.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** This notice announces the intention of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to request that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approve the proposed information collection project: *“Collection of Information for Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s (AHRQ) Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Health Plan Survey Comparative Database.”* In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, AHRQ invites the public to comment on this proposed information collection.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by [insert date 60 days after date of publication].

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be submitted to: Doris Lefkowitz, Reports Clearance Officer, AHRQ, by email at [doris.lefkowitz@AHRQ.hhs.gov](mailto:doris.lefkowitz@AHRQ.hhs.gov).

Copies of the proposed collection plans, data collection instruments, and specific details on the estimated burden can be obtained from the AHRQ Reports Clearance Officer.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Doris Lefkowitz, AHRQ Reports Clearance Officer, (301) 427-1477, or by email at [doris.lefkowitz@AHRQ.hhs.gov](mailto:doris.lefkowitz@AHRQ.hhs.gov).

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **Proposed Project**

*Collection of Information for Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Health Plan Survey Comparative Database*

**Request for information collection approval.** The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) requests that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reapprove, under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, AHRQ's collection of information for the AHRQ Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Database for Health Plans: OMB Control number 0935-0165, expiration July 31, 2013. The CAHPS Health Plan Database consists of data from the AHRQ CAHPS Health Plan Survey. Health plans in the U.S. are asked to voluntarily submit data from the survey to AHRQ, through its contractor, Westat. The CAHPS Database was developed by AHRQ in 1998 in response to requests from health plans, purchasers, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide comparative data to support public reporting of health plan ratings, health plan accreditation and quality improvement.

**Background on the CAHPS Health Plan Survey.** The CAHPS Health Plan Survey is a tool for collecting standardized information on enrollees' experiences with health plans and their services. The development of the CAHPS Health Plan Survey began in 1995, when AHRQ awarded the first set of CAHPS grants to Harvard, RTI, and RAND. In 1997 the CAHPS 1.0 survey was released by the CAHPS Consortium. The CAHPS Consortium refers to the research organizations involved in the development, dissemination, and support of CAHPS products. The current Consortium includes AHRQ, CMS, RAND, Yale School of Public Health, and Westat.

Since that time, the Consortium has clarified and updated the survey instrument to reflect field test results; feedback from industry experts; reports from health plan participants,

data collection vendors, and other users; and evidence from cognitive testing and focus groups. In November 2006, the CAHPS Consortium released the latest version of the instrument: the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 4.0. The development of this update to the Health Plan Survey has been part of the "Ambulatory CAHPS (A-CAHPS) Initiative," which arose as a result of extensive research conducted with users. AHRQ released the CAHPS Health Plan Survey 4.0, along with guidance on how to customize and administer it. The National Quality Forum endorsed the 4.0 version of the Health Plan Survey in July 2007.

**Rationale for the information collection.** The CAHPS Health Plan Database uses data from AHRQ's standardized CAHPS Health plan survey to provide comparative results to health care purchasers, consumers, regulators and policy makers across the country. The Database also provides data for AHRQ's annual National Healthcare Quality and National Healthcare Disparities Reports. Voluntary participants include public and private employers, State Medicaid agencies, State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and individual health plans.

This study is being conducted by AHRQ through its contractor, Westat, pursuant to AHRQ's statutory authority to conduct and support research on healthcare and on systems for the delivery of such care, including activities with respect to: the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness and value of healthcare services; quality measurement and improvement; and database development. 42 U.S.C. 299a(a)(1), (2), and (a)(8).

### **Method of Collection**

Each year State Medicaid agencies, and individual health plans decide whether to participate in the database and prepare their materials and dataset for submission to the CAHPS Health Plan Database. Participating organizations are typically State Medicaid

agencies with multiple health plans. However, individual health plans are also encouraged to submit their data to the CAHPS Database. The number of data submissions per registrant varies from participant to participant and year to year because some participants submit data for multiple health plans, while others may only submit survey data for one plan.

Each organization that decides to participate in the database must have their point-of-contact (POC) complete a registration form providing their contact information for access to the on-line data submission system, sign and submit a DUA, and provide health plan characteristics such as health plan name, product type, type of population surveyed, health plan state, and plan name to appear in the reporting of their results.

Each vendor that submits files on behalf of a Medicaid agency or individual health plan must also complete the registration form in order to obtain access to the on-line submission system. The vendor, on behalf of their client, may also complete additional information about survey administration (CAHPS survey version used, mode of survey administration, total enrollment count, description of how the sample was selected), submit a copy of the questionnaire used, and submit one data file per health plan. Commercial health plan data is received directly from NCQA. Medicare health plan data is received from CMS.

Survey data from the CAHPS Health Plan Database is used to produce four types of products: 1) an annual chartbook available to the public on the CAHPS Database web site (<https://www.cahpsdatabase.ahrq.gov/CAHPSIDB/Public/Chartbook.aspx>); 2) individual participant comparative reports that are confidential and customized for each participating organization (e.g., health plan, Medicaid agency) that submits their data; 3) a research database available to researchers wanting to conduct additional analyses; and 4) data tables provided to AHRQ for inclusion in the National Healthcare Quality and National Healthcare Disparities Reports.

## **Estimated Annual Respondent Burden**

Exhibit 1 shows the estimated burden hours for the respondent to participate in the database. The burden hours pertain only to the collection of Medicaid data from State Medicaid agencies and individual Medicaid health plans because those are the only entities that submit data through the data submission process (other data are obtained directly from NCQA and CMS as noted earlier in Section 2). The 80 POCs in exhibit 1 are a combination of an estimated 60 State Medicaid agencies and individual health plans, and 20 estimated vendors.

Each State Medicaid agency, health plan or vendor will register online for submission. The online Registration form will require about 5 minutes to complete. Each submitter will also complete a Health Plan information form of information about each Health Plan such as the name of the plan, the product type (e.g., HMO, PPO), the population surveyed (e.g., adult Medicaid or child Medicaid), the health plan State, total enrollment at the time the sample frame was generated, mode of survey administration (mail, telephone, IVR) and how the sample was selected. The online Health Plan Information form takes on average 30 minutes to complete per health plan with each POC completing the form for 4 plans on average. The data use agreement will be completed by the 60 participating State Medicaid agencies or individual health plans. Vendors do not sign or submit DUAs. The DUA requires about 3 minutes to sign and return by fax or mail. Each submitter will provide a copy of their questionnaire and the survey data file in the required file format. Survey data files must conform to the data file layout specifications provide by the CAHPS Database. Since the unit of analysis is at the health plan level, submitters will upload one data file per health plan. Once a data file is uploaded the file will be automatically checked to ensure it conforms to the specifications and a data file status report will be produced and made available to the submitter. Submitters will review each report and will be expected to fix any errors in their data file and resubmit if necessary. It will take about one hour to submit the data for each plan, and each POC will submit data for 4 plans on average. The total burden is estimated to be 490 hours annually.

Exhibit 2 shows the estimated annualized cost burden based on the respondents' time to complete one submission process. The cost burden is estimated to be \$20,202 annually.

**Exhibit 1. Estimated Annualized Burden Hours**

Form Name	Number of respondents/ POCs	Number of responses per POC	Hours per response	Total burden hours
Registration Form	80	1	5/60	7
Health Plan Information Form	80	4	30/60	160
Data Use Agreement	60	1	3/60	3
Data Files Submission	80	4	1	320
Total	300	NA	NA	490

**Exhibit 2. Estimated annualized cost burden**

Form Name	Number of respondent s/POCs	Total Burden hours	Average Hourly Wage Rate*	Total Cost burden
Registration Form	80	7	47.34 <sup>a</sup>	\$331
Health Plan Information Form	80	160	47.34 <sup>a</sup>	\$7,574
Data Use Agreement	60	3	85.02 <sup>b</sup>	\$255
Data Files Submission	80	320	37.63 <sup>c</sup>	\$12,042
Total	300	490	NA	\$20,202

\* National Compensation Survey: Occupational wages in the United States May 2012, "U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics."

a) Based on the mean hourly wage for Medical and Health Services Managers (11-9111).

b) Based on the mean hourly wage for Chief Executives (11-1011).

c) Based on the mean hourly wages for Computer Programmer (15-1131).

**Request for Comments**

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, comments on AHRQ's information collection are requested with regard to any of the following: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of AHRQ health care research and health care information dissemination functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of AHRQ's estimate of burden

(including hours and costs) of the proposed collection(s) of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information upon the respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and included in the Agency's subsequent request for OMB approval of the proposed information collection. All comments will become a matter of public record.

Dated: August 8, 2013

Carolyn M. Clancy,  
AHRQ Director

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